

---

*PENTICTON PUBLIC LIBRARY  
STRATEGIC PLAN*

*2015-2018*

### Contents

---

Introduction.....	2
History of the Penticton Public Library.....	2
Penticton Public Library in Context .....	3
Approach to Developing Strategic Plan.....	4
Local data informing our planning .....	4
Larger library trends .....	5
Community Survey: .....	6
Values, Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions.....	7
Values: .....	7
Vision Statement: .....	7
Mission Statement: .....	7
Strategic Directions of Penticton Public Library: .....	8
Strategic Planning Committee .....	9

### Introduction

---

Libraries play a central role in their communities as places to gather, access information, and find material for inspiration, learning, and play. Libraries are community builders; we hold our local history, information about our local government's plans, business, legal, and health resources. Libraries are a leveler for a community; rich or poor, all are welcome in our doors – we have no fees to use the library for residents of our community. Libraries are a centre for lifelong learning; regardless of your interests there will be something to learn in the Library.

Library service has changed a fair bit in the last decade, but at its core we still offer our communities services they expect from us. Children and their caregivers can come for a free storytime, jobseekers can come and use our computers to develop resumes, new immigrants can find information about Canada and books in foreign languages, people with print disabilities can find collections of audiobooks and Daisy titles, and anyone can find a movie to watch for the weekend or the latest novel by their favourite author. If we don't have it, we can usually get it.

### History of the Penticton Public Library

---

Penticton Public Library was initially formed in 1909 as a public library reading room. The Penticton Public Library has had various homes over the years, but has been part of the Library-Museum Complex since 1965.

When a provincial government initiative created the Okanagan Union Library, Penticton voted against participation due to cost and governance issues, in 1935. However, the amalgamation of school boards in 1947 forced Penticton to join the Okanagan Regional Library but the decision was not popular. Complaints about cost and quality of service led to Penticton taxpayers voting to withdraw from the regional system in December of 1968. The following year a second bylaw (1969-2639) formed the Penticton Public Library as a municipal library under the BC Library Act.

Since 1969 the library has seen a number of major challenges and changes. The library was expanded in 1988 and renovated in 2013. We were the first BC library to introduce the Dynix automated catalogue and one of the first places in Penticton to offer access to the internet. In 2006 we introduced, together with most BC libraries, a new online collection of e-books. In 2014 we joined the Kootenay Library Federation to take advantage of some of the economies of scale offered by a larger federation of independent libraries. Late in 2013 we conducted a community survey to assess the satisfaction levels of the community with our services and to look for community suggestions on how we might continue to grow.

### Penticton Public Library in Context

---

Penticton is a community of 33,000 plus an additional 10,000 in the surrounding area of the Regional District Okanagan Similkameen. Penticton Public Library's visible central location offers good access for the community as a whole. Penticton Public Library is an independent municipal library.

Our service area is surrounded by the Okanagan Regional Library. ORL Branches: Summerland, Naramata, Kaleden and Okanagan Falls are the nearest libraries outside of Penticton. We see heavy use by patrons of these libraries in Penticton through the BC One Card program.

Penticton Public Library is a well-used library with between 4,500 and 5,000 visitors per week. Our current users are very supportive of the library. Penticton Public Library is open 59 hours (7 days) a week in the winter and 55 hours (6 days) a week in the summer. We circulate approximately 115 books per open hour from our collections which range from board books for children to legal reference titles. We offer a regular slate of free public programs for all ages, plus additional author visits and special events. We have seven computers that are available to the public to use free of charge (with a library card,) plus printing and scanning services.

Library staff consists of 5 professional librarians, 4 library technicians, 1 community librarian, 6 library assistants, 1 adult page, and 6 student pages. Together this is a total of approximately 13.7 FTE positions. These staff members are skilled in diverse areas from information and readers' advisory services, early literacy, cataloguing, technical services, consumer computer technology, programing and customer service.

We have an experienced staff who are passionate about the service we provide for the community. Along with services for individuals, we provide support for community non-profits such as South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services, Interior Health, Boys and Girls Club, and Literacy Now. We also serve public and private schools and preschools along with job seekers and small businesses.

In 2013, we underwent a renovation and assessment of our physical layout which refreshed and opened up our physical space. However, despite the recent renovation we continue to struggle with a facility that is too small for the size of our community, collection and services. The Library lacks dedicated space for meetings or study, programing space, and a computer lab. This has led to conflict between patrons, concerns over privacy, and the loss of opportunities for partnerships with other community organizations.

Financially, while we are supported by the provincial and local governments and additional funding through an agreement from the Okanagan Regional Library, we struggle with growth of services due to operating very close to our budget lines. Over the years of tight budgets we have maximized our internal systems to prevent waste of time and resources. Simply put, there is no room to grow the services we offer to meet patron demand. Library staff are also frequently overburdened with multiple tasks, which constrains the development of new projects or initiatives. Future fundraising or grant opportunities may help alleviate these limitations with project-based funding.

The possibility of developing an economic impact study of the Library was proposed and initially endorsed in 2014; however the costs of having this report done externally were prohibitive. While a full report of this nature is out of reach currently, we hope to develop a similar study in the future.

Internally, we also struggle to market our programs and services. All marketing is currently done in house by the staff person responsible for the service and as such we lack a unified feel or plan. Ultimately, this has led to a lack of awareness of the services we offer and the impact they have on our community. There are many assumptions regarding library service from non-users of the library. Specifically, that the services we develop, even the collection itself, are of little relevance to their daily life.

The rapid pace of technological change is a challenge for the Library. Patron expectations and our internal skill sets require constant attention. As these expectations change we must ensure that staff is current in their knowledge and ability to assist patrons. Initially, expectations were simply to help patrons with ebooks, but increasingly we are asked to assist with everything from formatting documents to navigating security options for email services to assisting with government forms online. Beyond keeping our skills up-to-date we must also maintain our public computers to match patron expectations.

Penticton Public Library is in the fortunate position of belonging to a consortium that licenses e-content on our behalf, but whether we break away from this model or begin to purchase licenses for our collection will depend largely on patron demands for ebooks. Other licensing arrangements for digital content, Zinio (popular magazines) and AVOD (documentary videos), have already been added for a trial period to determine interest and demand, but are also subscriptions where the library does not curate the content. Other digital options for popular movies and music may be possible in the future but the current model is potentially crippling expensive. A comprehensive business case will be required prior to committing to this model.

### Approach to Developing Strategic Plan

---

The Strategic Planning Committee took a multi-pronged approach to developing our 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. The Committee examined our past data and usage statistics, developed an environmental scan of library services in general and conducted a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of our library and its services. Further, we attempted to align our goals and priorities with those of the City of Penticton and the BC Ministry of Education.

The December 2013 Community Survey, including the organizational survey, informed the planning process as well. Though the sample size for both surveys was not statistically sound, some general trends in responses were identified.

Finally, with this background data, the Library Board and Library Staff came together for two sessions to outline our values, vision and mission and draft the strategic priorities for the Library.

### Local data informing our planning

---

Demographically, there are few surprises in our research. 26% of Penticton's residents are over the age of 65; 62% of the population fall between 15 to 64 years old. The number of school aged children has dropped by 10.5% according to the school enrolment statistics between 2009 and 2014. The largest group, demographically and for library membership is those of working age – 15 to 64.

The economy is historically based in natural resources and agriculture which has expanded to include tourism, high tech, and service industries. Both Penticton's local government and the provincial government of BC focus on job creation and economic development. Economically, the *Regional Labour Market Outlook – Thompson Okanagan (2010-2020)* indicates that there will be a small amount of growth in the area. A further study *Growing in the Okanagan: Labour Market Outlook (2014)* indicates that the Okanagan-Similkameen has lower participation and employment rates when compared to the Central Okanagan.

Penticton is served by School District 67 (kindergarten to grade 12) along with several private schools and preschools. ConnectEd provides an alternate school and there is a strong homeschool community. Additionally, one of the Okanagan College locations operates in Penticton. The college offers certificates, diplomas, degrees, and programs, as well as a healthy range of continuing education classes for community members.

### Larger library trends

---

Unsurprisingly, trends in library service have been moving increasingly towards digital services. Rapidly changing technologies have proved to be a challenge for libraries regardless of size with patrons expecting more digital content and services. It is a reversal of traditional models; where rather than owning items specifically for our patrons to use, libraries must now license content and the platform in which it's made available. The license fees for ebooks for libraries are currently much more than the consumer license, and it is difficult to predict readers' preferences for physical or digital content.

Technology has also impacted library trends by broadening the definitions of literacy to include digital skills. It can be argued that public libraries have done this since the advent of personal computers and the growth of the internet; however, the rapidly changing pace of consumer technology means that library staff must keep up-to-date on these trends and frequently struggle to keep their skills current.

Many experts have argued that to maintain their relevance, public libraries must become centres of content creation rather than consumption. The trend towards developing Makerspaces is a significant departure from traditional library services. These spaces have had tremendous success in large centres, such as Vancouver and Edmonton; however, there are obvious challenges for small and medium sized libraries to commit funds and space for this type of enterprise.

At the time of developing our Strategic Plan the Royal Society of Canada (The Academies of Arts, Humanities and Sciences) was conducting research on the status and future of Canada's libraries. The final document *Future Now: Canada's Libraries, Archives, and Public Memory* is available online. Early drafts of this document informed our trends report.

This report has emphasized measuring the value of public library service to a community. Often library service has been seen as a “soft” service where the emphasis has been placed on the social good and cultural heart of a community. One recent trend; however, has been to develop an additional evidence based economic impact model in demonstrating the value of libraries. For example, *So Much More: The Economic Impact of the Toronto Public Library on the City of Toronto* illustrates the economic impact for every \$1.00 spent on the library by the municipality.

Other recommendations developed by this report include increasing community connections for other agencies, community led development services as pioneered by the *Working Together Project*, and services to underserved populations (new immigrants, Aboriginal Canadians, and individuals with print disabilities.)

### Community Survey:

---

In late 2013 and early 2014, we conducted two community surveys focused on users and non-users of the Penticton Public Library, with a secondary focus on other community organizations. The full survey report can be accessed through the Chief Librarian’s office. Unfortunately, the consultation process in attempting to reach other community organizations was faulty. In the future we are considering examining a more direct method of soliciting input from organizational respondents.

Results of this survey indicate that the majority of respondents who are already library users are content with our existing services and the status quo. However, promotion and marketing of our existing services and programs needs improvement. Customer service remains a high priority in competing with the private sector and online vendors. We need to adapt our physical space or create flexible spaces as needed to continue developing library services. We need to ensure that our staff has sufficient support to meet the changing technical needs of our patrons.

The non-user survey indicates that awareness of library services remains the greatest hurdle to drawing in these individuals; however, library services were not perceived to be of great personal value to some of these respondents. Improving knowledge and perception are important, but we recognize that we are unlikely to reach 100% participation from the community.

### Values, Vision, Mission and Strategic Directions

---

The Penticton Public Library Board and Staff met together twice for visioning sessions that were facilitated by Patricia Tribe to develop the following values, vision, and mission. From these sessions the Strategic Planning Committee were able to put together six strategic directions for the coming four years.

#### Values:

---

The Penticton Public Library Board and Staff:

- Support *lifelong learning*
- Encourage *diversity*
- Provide *non-judgemental service*
- Provide open/free *access* to information and resources
- Offer quality *information*
- Build *community*
- Support multiple *literacies*
- Develop and enhance *connections* with community partners
- Offer *equitable* service
- Be a *safe & comfortable place*

#### Vision Statement:

---

Penticton Public Library continues to be a welcoming and thriving gathering place, engaging with our diverse community and encouraging all ages in their pursuit of learning and personal growth.

#### Mission Statement:

---

Our library is a thriving presence, responsive and connected to our diverse community through innovative services, outreach and partnerships.



### Strategic Directions of Penticton Public Library:

---

#### **Raise public awareness: tell our story**

The Library Board and staff will seek to communicate our value to the community, and facilitate the ways in which our supporters can champion the library by strengthening our existing relationships and developing a marketing plan for the Library.

#### **Increase community engagement**

The Library Board and Staff will seek to increase opportunities for the community to interact with the library by engaging new audiences with targeted services, and improving access to our library. We will also work to strengthen our working relationships with elected officials, municipal staff, other libraries, the media and other community groups.

#### **Put the patron experience first**

The Library Board will seek to put the patron's experience first by engaging in a continuous review of policies and procedures, by supporting staff in pursuing ongoing training to improve services, expertise and technical assistance, and by encouraging ongoing public feedback and being responsive to suggestions where possible. Library staff will implement best collection management practices to ensure relevance of all library collections.

#### **Foster lifelong learning**

The Library Board and Staff will ensure that the library stays relevant and current by building and evaluating services, collections and programs. We will support patrons in lifelong learning in the face of evolving 21st century literacies and provide an environment that fosters creative expression and innovation while embracing new technologies that meet information needs and enhance access to information while improving efficiency.

#### **Become Penticton's gathering space**

The Library Board and Staff will work to create an adaptable space to meet the community's various needs, while enhancing our library as a welcoming, lively, and safe gathering place. The Library Staff will strive to offer more events and services that make the Library a destination.

#### **Promote responsible management**

The Library Board will strive to strengthen relationships with existing funders while seeking new funding sources. The trustees will work towards improving Board development and training to ensure that governance and management are in line with Library goals and objectives.

### Strategic Planning Committee

---

Linda King, Library Board Chair  
Donna Butler, Library Board Vice-Chair  
Heather Buzzell, Chief Librarian  
Julia Cox, Youth Services Librarian  
David Folstad, Trustee  
Shane Fox, Trustee  
Ernie Ingles, Trustee